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SUBJECT Letter from SSU-TU Mei-tang Questioning Communist Policy toward Overseas Chinese

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The following letter from SSU-TU Mei-tang to "two gentlemen," obviously Chinese Communist Party members, was written sometime between 29 October and 12 December 1948. The letter asks the gentlemen to answer questions put by overseas Chinese to the writer concerning their prospects under Communist rule in China.

"(Two) gentlemen,

1. I left Hong Kong on 26 October 1948 and arrived in San Francisco on 29 October 1948. Overseas Chinese take great interest in the present situation in the fatherland, and appreciate the great efforts you have made in leading the people in the struggle for democratic politics. Overseas Chinese are patriotic and full of revolutionary spirit. Despite all sacrifices (sic), they have not lagged behind others. What we aspire to is simple. We support those who will create a peaceful, independent and free China, and we do not care to what party or clique they belong.
2. However, the fatherland is far away, and the overseas Chinese do not know much about the situation there nor about the coalition government to be formed at the Political Consultative Conference. Not being an eloquent orator, I am unable to explain everything to them fully. There are a few points regarding overseas Chinese policy we wish to know, and we beg that you will reply openly.
 - a. What policy will the new government adopt -- democracy or communism? If the former is adopted, how long will it be enforced? How will the realization of democracy be guaranteed? How can certain overseas Chinese, staying abroad and wishing to represent the views of overseas Chinese so that they may recover their political and economic status in China, join the new government?
 - b. The Nanking Government, having no credit, has failed to redeem the National Salvation Bonds and American Currency Savings Bonds it issued.

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DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77

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Date: 8 May 78 By: 018

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Will the new government redeem these bonds, to compensate for losses incurred by overseas Chinese through patriotism and resistance against the Japanese?

- c. The statement issued on 1 May by MAO Tze-tung includes policies for the protection of commerce and industry, and a solution to the problem of people's livelihood by using productive reconstruction. These are consistent with my new reconstruction scheme. For the past year I have been appealing to overseas Chinese to participate in this scheme. In the past, investments made by overseas Chinese in China were exploited or destroyed by greedy and corrupt officials. For example I may mention the railway in Canton and the Ningyang Railway* which never came into existence. These have scared overseas Chinese. What protection will the New Democratic Government give to investments made by overseas Chinese capitalists? The capital assets of certain banks and enterprises have been provided by overseas Chinese, but were encroached upon or taken over by bureaucratic capitalists (for instance, the bankruptcy of the Bank of Canton). Will the new government take steps to compensate losses sustained by overseas Chinese in these concerns?
 - d. During the war years, the Central Bank of China and the four big families either held or under-rated overseas Chinese remittances, and enriched themselves. Consequently many families in China of overseas Chinese were completely ruined. Because they did not receive remittances, about 300,000 people in the Ssu I** districts died of starvation. Will the new government allow overseas Chinese to complain against these unscrupulous banking elements, and will the latter be prosecuted as war criminals at open trials and punished?
 - e. During the war, a smuggler surnamed KUAN (關) of Ssu I amassed a fortune, taking advantage of the national calamity. He lent money at usury, and encroached upon the properties of overseas Chinese. Later, complaints against him prevented him from taking over the properties, but he still has a great number -- about 10,000 -- of title deeds. Will the new government take up the matter, return the title deeds to their respective owners, quell the indignation of overseas Chinese and protect their interests?
 - f. During the war, houses belonging to overseas Chinese in Canton, Shanghai, Swatow, Amoy and Foochow were seized or sold by the collaborators. After the victory the occupation officials, taking advantage of their position, encroached upon these properties, and changed names in the title deeds or laid false charges against the owners -- some of whom were imprisoned or threatened with death -- not only causing a loss of property, but also insulting overseas Chinese who have never been given an opportunity to vent their grievance. Will the new government look into the matter and secure the return of these properties to their rightful owners?
 - g. Certain Nanking diplomats and consuls abroad are inefficient and corrupt. They toady to foreigners and fail to protect properly overseas Chinese, and are much hated. For example I may cite LI Chun-ti (李俊建), ex-Ambassador to Cuba. Will the new government allow overseas Chinese to lay charges against such officials?
3. Although there are many problems concerning overseas Chinese, the above are seven points which overseas Chinese will never forget. The resolution for

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special care for overseas Chinese passed by the South China People's Armed Forces*** has been read with thanks, and I agree to it. The above are a few minor points, and if a detailed reply and an assurance are furnished, overseas Chinese will most happily make efforts for the new government. Overseas Chinese have been and are the matrix of the revolution. Please favor me with a reply.

With compliments.

SSU-TU Mei-tang (司徒美堂) ."

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* ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment. This probably refers to the line connecting Toushan (112-50,22-03) and Chiangmen (113-06,22-34) which was completed at one time but was destroyed during the early part of the Sino-Japanese war.

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** ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment. Ssu I (四邑) is the Four Districts: Enping, Kaiping, Taishan, and Hsinhui.

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